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ABSTRACT

In 1917, Chaim Weizmann persuaded the British government to issue a statement (later called the Balfour Declaration) favoring the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Because of the arrival of many Jews in Palestine in the 1930s and Arab fears about Palestine's future, guerrilla fighting broke out between the two groups. When U.S. President Harry Truman took office, he made clear his sympathies were with the Jews and accepted the Balfour Declaration, explaining that it was in keeping with former President Woodrow Wilson's principle of self determination. Truman initiated several studies of the Palestine situation that supported his belief that, as a result of the Holocaust, Jews were oppressed and in need of a homeland. On May 14, 1948, the Provisional Government of Israel proclaimed a new state of Israel. President Truman released a statement of recognition without notifying his delegates to the United Nations first. This lesson plan uses that statement of recognition (a press release) as one of its primary source documents. The lesson provides an historical overview of Israel's beginnings; identifies the correlations for National History Standards and National Civics and Government Standards; presents discussion questions for analyzing the document; suggests further research; and lists terms to define. Contains a photocopy of Truman's press release and a telegram from the U.S. State Department alerting its foreign personnel about the situation. Also contains a written document analysis worksheet. (BT)

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ED 466 420

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TEACHING WITH DOCUMENTS

The U.S. Recognition of the State of Israel

SO 033 948

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2002

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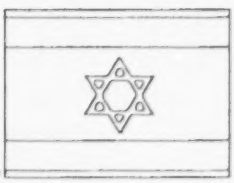
Teaching With Documents Lesson Plan:

The U.S. Recognition of the State of Israel

Background



In 1917 Chaim Weizmann, scientist, statesperson, and Zionist, persuaded the British government to issue a statement favoring the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. The statement, which became known as the Balfour Declaration, was, in part, payment to the Jews for their support of the British against the Turks during World War I. After the war, the League of Nations ratified the declaration and in 1922 appointed Britain to rule Palestine.

This course of events caused Jews to be optimistic about the eventual establishment of a homeland. Their optimism inspired the immigration to Palestine of Jews from many countries, particularly from Germany when Nazi persecution of Jews began. The arrival of many Jewish immigrants in the 1930s awakened Arab fears that Palestine would become a national homeland for the Jews. By 1936 guerrilla fighting had broken out between the Jews and the Arabs. Unable to maintain peace, Britain issued a white paper in 1939 that restricted Jewish immigration into Palestine. The Jews, feeling betrayed, bitterly opposed the policy and looked to the United States for support.

While President Franklin D. Roosevelt appeared to be sympathetic to the Jewish cause, his assurances to the Arabs that the United States would not intervene without consulting both parties caused public uncertainty about his position. When Harry S. Truman took office, he made clear that his sympathies were with the Jews and accepted the Balfour Declaration, explaining that it was in keeping with former President Woodrow Wilson's principle of "self-determination." Truman initiated several studies of the Palestine situation that supported his belief that, as a result of the Holocaust, Jews were oppressed and also in need of a homeland. Throughout the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, the Departments of War and State, recognizing the possibility of a Soviet-Arab connection and the potential Arab restriction on oil supplies to this country, advised against U.S. intervention on behalf of the Jews.

Britain and the United States, in a joint effort to examine the dilemma, established the "Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry." In April 1946, the committee submitted recommendations that Palestine not be dominated by either Arabs or Jews. It concluded that attempts to establish nationhood or independence would result in civil strife; that a trusteeship agreement aimed at bringing Jews and Arabs together should be established by the United Nations; that full Jewish immigration be allowed into Palestine; and that two autonomous states be established with a strong central government to control Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and the Negev, the southernmost section of Palestine.

British, Arab, and Jewish reactions to the recommendations were not favorable. Jewish terrorism in Palestine antagonized the British, and by February 1947 Arab-Jewish communications had collapsed. Britain, anxious to rid itself of the problem, set the United Nations in motion, formally requesting on April 2, 1947, that the U.N. General Assembly set up the Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). This committee recommended that the British mandate over Palestine be ended and that the territory be partitioned into two states. Jewish reaction was mixed--some wanted control of all of Palestine; others realized that partition spelled hope for their dream of a homeland. The Arabs were not at all agreeable to the UNSCOP plan. In October the Arab League Council directed the governments of its member states to move troops to the Palestine border. Meanwhile, President Truman instructed the State Department to support the U.N. plan, and, reluctantly it did so. On November 29, 1947, the partition plan was passed by the U.N. General Assembly.

At midnight on May 14, 1948, the Provisional Government of Israel proclaimed a new State of Israel. On that same date, the United States, in the person of President Truman, recognized the provisional Jewish government as *de facto* authority of the Jewish state (*de jure* recognition was extended on January 31, 1949). The U.S. delegates to the U.N. and top-ranking State Department officials were angered that Truman released his recognition statement to the press without notifying them first. On May 15, 1948, the first day of Israeli Independence and exactly one year after UNSCOP was established, Arab armies invaded Israel and the first Arab-Israeli war began.

The telegram reproduced here is from decimal file 867n.01/5-1448, Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC. The press release is from the records of Charles G. Ross, Alphabetical File, Handwriting of the President at the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO. The Library is part of the Presidential Libraries system of the National Archives and Records Administration.

The Documents

Document 1: The Telegram from Department of State

Document 2: Press Release Recognizing Israel

Lesson Resources

Teaching Activities

Document Analysis Worksheet

Page URL: http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/us_recognition_of_israel/us_recognition_of_israel.html

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Teaching Activities

Standards Correlations

This lesson correlates to the National History Standards.

- Era 9-Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)
  - Standard 2B-Demonstrate understanding of U.S. foreign policy in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America.

This lesson correlates to the National Standards for World History.

Era 9-The 20th Century Since 1945: Promises and Paradoxes

- Standard 1A-Demonstrate understanding of major political and economic changes that accompanied post-war recovery.

This lesson correlates to the National Standards for Civics and Government.

- IV.B.3-Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on foreign policy issues in light of American national interests, values, and principles.

Cross-curricular Connections

Share this exercise with your history, government, geography, and language arts colleagues.

Student Activity

The activity provided is for use with the telegram. (You might choose to design another activity for use with the press release.)

While this document does not lend itself to any critical analysis of the Arab-Israeli conflict, we hope that it will provide a starting point from which to consider the conflict.

Note: The document is signed by Secretary of State George C. Marshall. Loy

Henderson, whose name also appears on the document, was director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, and wrote the document. NIACT is code for "action communications indicator requiring attention by recipient at any hour of the day or night" and related to method of distribution.

Discussion Questions

1. What kind of document is it?
2. Who wrote it?
3. To whom is it addressed?
4. Does it have any historical significance?
5. Why do you suppose the document was at one time classified "top secret"?
6. Write a paragraph describing how you, a U.S. consul (choose in which country you are stationed), might have reacted to receiving this document.

For Further Research

1. Students should develop a timeline of Arab-Israeli conflict from 1948 to the present. They can use the timeline to research events that they have noted, drawing parallels, making predictions, etc.
2. Using maps, students should examine changes that have taken place in the area of Palestine over a period of time.
3. Students should research the political aspects of the U.S. position in the Middle East, considering, for example, Truman's position in view of the 1948 presidential election.

Terms to Define

- de facto
- de jure
- consulate
- white paper

Additional Information

More information and images of nearly 100 documents related to the recognition of Israel [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/israel/index.htm] are available on the Project Whistlestop Web site. Project Whistlestop is an online resource of documents, photographs, cartoons, and other archival materials from the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library in Independence, Missouri. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/]

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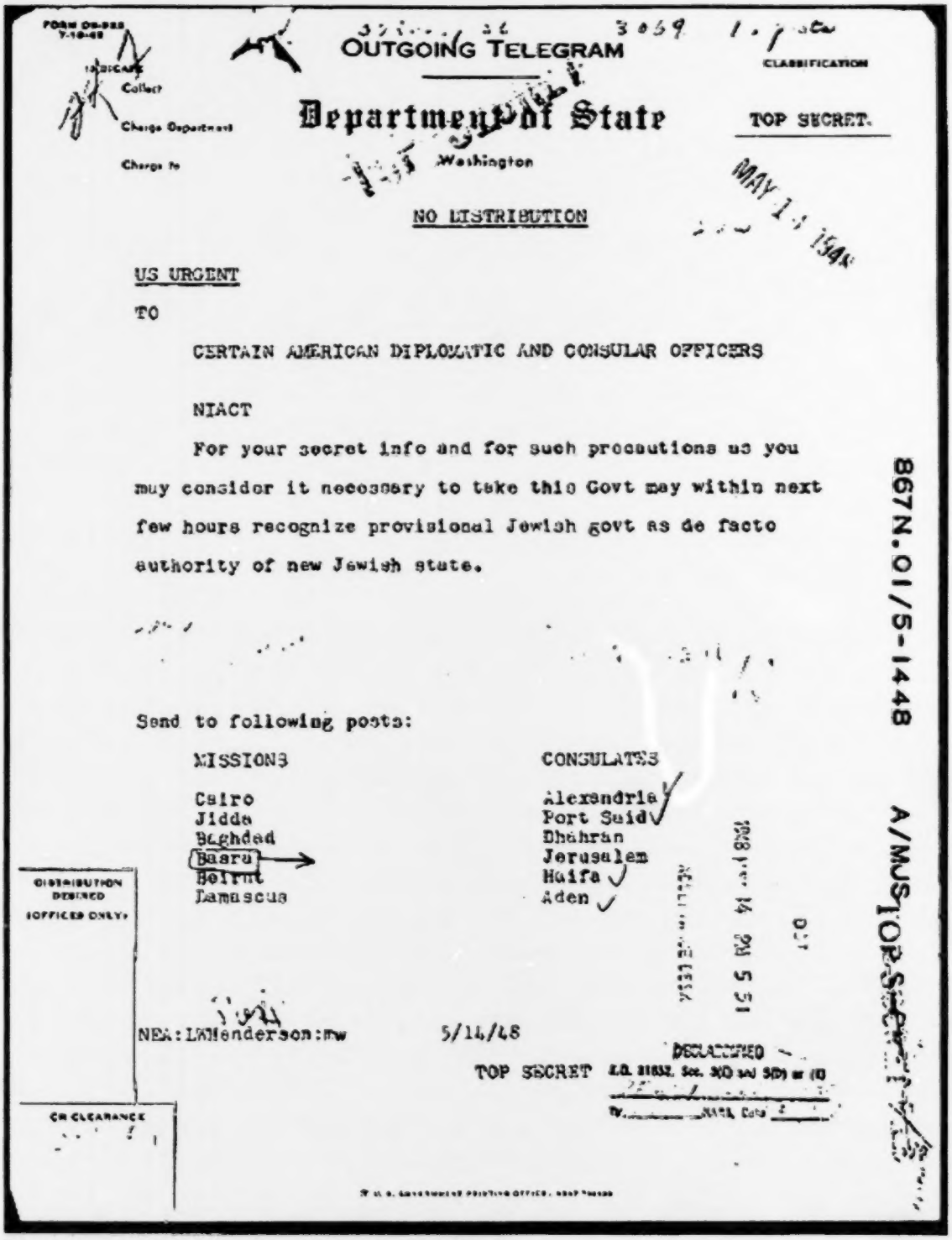

OUTGOING TELEGRAM

Department of State

CLASSIFICATION

TOP SECRET

Collect

Charge Department

Charge to

Washington

MAY 1 4 1948

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US URGENT

TO

CERTAIN AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR OFFICERS

NIACT

For your secret info and for such precautions as you may consider it necessary to take this Govt may within next few hours recognize provisional Jewish govt as de facto authority of new Jewish state.

Send to following posts:

MISSIONS

Cairo
Jidda
Baghdad
Basra
Beirut
Damascus

CONSULATES

Alexandria
Port Said
Dhahran
Jerusalem
Haifa
Aden

867N.01/5-1448

A/MJS:IOS:Sheen:jf

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NEA:LWHenderson:mw 5/14/48

TOP SECRET

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 11652, Sec. 3(D) and 5(D) or (E)

By _____ NARS, Date _____

Document 1: Telegram from Department of State

This Government has been informed that a Jewish state has been proclaimed in Palestine, and recognition has been requested by the provisional Government thereof.

The United States recognizes the provisional government as the de facto authority of the new ~~Jewish~~ State of ~~state.~~ Israel.

Harry Truman

Approved
May 14, 1948.

6:11

Document 2: Press Release on Recognition of Israel

Written Document Analysis Worksheet

1. TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):

___ Newspaper	___ Map	___ Advertisement
___ Letter	___ Telegram	___ Congressional record
___ Patent	___ Press release	___ Census report
___ Memorandum	___ Report	___ Other

2. UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):

___ Interesting letterhead	___ Notations
___ Handwritten	___ "RECEIVED" stamp
___ Typed	___ Other
___ Seals	

3. DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:
_____

4. AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:
_____

POSITION (TITLE):
_____

5. FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN?
_____

6. DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)

A. List three things the author said that you think are important:
_____
_____
_____

B. Why do you think this document was written?
_____
_____

C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.
_____
_____

D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:
_____
_____

E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:
_____
_____

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